

## **You Need Each Other (Part 2 of Coffee and Contemplation and Kisses) by obeydontstray**

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**Summary:** (Revamped) (Pre series one shot) "For a police officer, you sure are oblivious." Flo always was a straight shooter with Hopper.

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She looked so tired as she sat in the chair opposite his desk.

She sat with her hands in her lap and he believed if she could, she'd disappear into the air around them.

"This is the second time this month, Joyce. Let me put a restraining order on him already." He offered.

"That won't help. Besides, I think he got the point this time."

Hop raised his eyebrows. "And what makes you think that?"

"Because Jonathan literally threw him out the front door. If that doesn't scream 'we don't want you here' then I don't know what will."

"At least press charges for your property, Joyce. Make him replace that window he smashed." He pressed.

She shook her head no, her hands wringing in her lap. He momentarily thought about rounding the desk to still them. "I just want to be done with him."

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Hop reached into his desk drawer and withdrew a form. "Just sign it. That's all you have to do. Then I'll tend to him personally if he decides to harass you and the boys ever again." He offered the restraining order to her. "I can skip all the red tape and get it effective immediately."

She refused. "Just keep him in jail until he sobers up, please? Then I don't care what he does."

She made her break for the door and he gracefully stepped in front of her, blocking her way. "Joyce, you guys can't keep on like this. I know he's their father, but he'll never have anything to do with them. You know that."

For the first time during this meeting, her eyes met his. God, she looked so run down. "He's a shit, Hop. But what if something happened to him. Or to one of the boys? What kind of person would I be to keep him away from his kids forever?"

Hopper drew in a breath, knowing he was getting nowhere. He stepped aside and opened his door for her. "If he bothers you again, you call me personally, okay?" It was no secret between them that nothing would make him happier in this world than getting to arrest Lonnie Byers. Again.

Her hand rested on his forearm then, tiny and almost weightless. She stared up into his eyes. "Thank you, Hop."

He nodded to her, unsure of just what she was thanking him for. Without thinking he brushed a strand of hair from her face, tucking it behind her ear.

She gave him a tired smile. "Later, Hop."

"See you around."

He watched her as she walked away, momentarily thinking of her curves and just how he held them so many years ago.

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"Can I talk to you for a moment, Chief?" Florence asked, peeking into his office where he now sat behind his desk.

"Sure thing, Flo."

He sat back behind his desk and reached for his coffee that he'd neglected. He grimaced when he took a sip, it'd gotten cold.

"For a police officer, you sure are oblivious."

He cocked an eyebrow at her. "What? Did I forget an appointment or something?"

"That's the second time you've let her walk out of here. Why don't you ask her out already?"

Jim nearly choked on his cold coffee.

"Any dummy can see you've got feelings for her."

"No I don't."

She made a disapproving noise. "You freeze whenever she's in a room. Your eyes are always on her. And really, tucking her hair behind her ear? You're in pretty deep, Chief."

He sighed and leaned back in his chair, his hands in his hair. "What do I have to offer to anyone?"

Flo chuckled. "A lot, according to the rumor mill."

Old Flo, she always was a straight shooter with him. As his childhood babysitter and now the backbone of his department, he dare not correct her. She was right, anyway.

"Joyce is too good for all of that. She deserves a good man. That ain't me."

Flo paused at his door. "You're a better man than you think, Jim Hopper. Give it time. You and Joyce Byers will end up together. You need each other."